

# MITHRAEUM LONDON

## **Roman London:** What was life like?

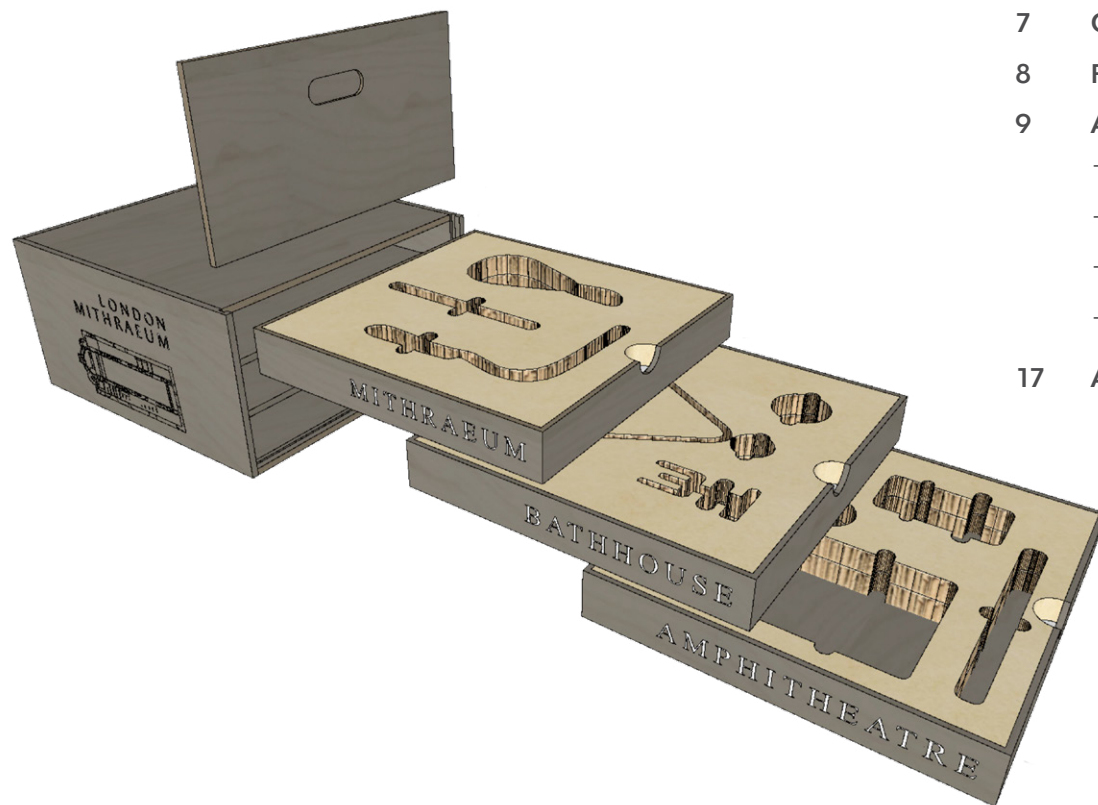
Explore it through a multi-sensory, remote-learning experience



**Key Stage Two**  
Interactive Virtual Schools Workshop:  
Teachers' Information Pack

# Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 4 Learning aims
- 5 What you'll need
- 6 Virtual session content
- 7 Object-handling guide and COVID-19 considerations
- 8 Replica Roman artefacts box
- 9 Activities using the Roman artefacts box
  - 10 London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE
  - 12 London's Roman Amphitheatre
  - 14 Billingsgate Roman House and Baths
  - 16 Further artefact activities
- 17 Acknowledgements



# Introduction

London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE, in partnership with the City of London, have developed this free schools programme to help your class connect with the rich history of Roman London.

Aimed at KS2 pupils and supporting the National Curriculum, the programme offers an interactive facilitated workshop delivered over live stream, as well as an artefact box and scent cubes.

LONDON MITHRAEUM  
Bloomberg SPACE



The session will provide an exciting and memorable cross-curricular experience, giving pupils the opportunity to virtually explore the remains of three hugely important Roman sites:

**London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE**  
**London's Roman Amphitheatre**  
**Billingsgate Roman House and Baths**

With the support of our facilitator, this programme will help to develop your pupils' historical inquiry skills, challenge them to think critically and enhance their understanding of the past.

# Learning aims

This programme addresses these areas of the **National Curriculum:**

- Understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources
- The Roman Empire and its impact on Britain: 'Romanisation' of Britain/London and the impact of the army; influences on architecture and technology; culture; religion and beliefs
- The complexity of people's lives, the process of change, the diversity of societies and relationships between different groups, as well as their own identity and the challenges of their time

We've used the **Skills Builder Framework** ([skillsbuilder.org](https://skillsbuilder.org)) to identify the skills we want to help develop through this programme.

These skills are:

**Listening**



**Speaking**



**Creativity**



**Problem solving**



We'll be asking teachers to feed back on our resources and the virtual workshop, based on how effectively they encourage your pupils to develop the four skills.

# What you'll need

Details for joining the virtual session on Zoom will be sent to you by email after your booking is confirmed. The session will be attended by classes from different schools. Teachers and pupils won't be visible to our facilitator or other participants but you'll be encouraged to interact via the Q&A and quizzes.

At least one adult will need to remain in your classroom during the workshop to support the activities, supervise safe object handling and relay the Q&A via chat to the facilitator.

## You'll need:

- ✓ The **Roman artefact box** set out with the three trays
- ✓ A **computer** that can join the Zoom call
- ✓ A **smartboard, large screen** or **projector** connected to that computer. This is how your students will see the live video
- ✓ **Speakers** connected to the computer (they might be built into your smartboard or screen). This is how your students will hear the live video
- ✓ You can test your equipment before booking by joining a **test Zoom meeting**. Ask your Bloomberg contact for instructions
- ✓ You could have a **camera** or **iPad** to hand to capture photos of the session
- ✓ For a successful session, your class needs to be in **three groups of equal size**

# Virtual session content

You'll join other classes and our facilitator to take a virtual journey around Roman London. An education expert will be at London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE and will lead the live workshop. The 60-minute workshop will explore three sites through virtual tours, interactive activities, object handling and investigating the sights and smells of *Londinium*. Together, we'll reveal the stories of the first Londoners, encouraging pupils to connect the past and present by exploring Roman religion, entertainment and leisure.

The session aims to promote observation, questioning and prediction skills, with the experience encouraging pupils to use most of the senses.

Content	Time	Learning Activities	Replica Roman object	Scent cube
Introduction to session	5 mins	Welcome by facilitator Session overview Feedback from class	N/A	N/A
London Mithraeum	15 mins	Site tour video Feedback from class Object handling	Wax tablet and stylus Buckle Oil lamp	Incense
London's Roman Amphitheatre	15 mins	Site tour video Object handling Poll on screen	Coin Crest holder Pendant	Lavender
Billingsgate Bathhouse	15 mins	Site tour video Object handling Object video	Strigil Bone pin Hygiene set	Smelly feet!
Plenary	10 mins	Q&A via chat	N/A	N/A

# Object-handling guide

## Please ask pupils to:

- Wash and dry their hands thoroughly - before and after handling. This will help to protect the objects and maintain good hygiene
- Be sitting comfortably with a clear, flat surface in front of them that the object can be put down and picked up from
- Use two hands to handle the objects
- Place the objects back into the space they came from; the spaces have been specially cut to provide the best support to the object
- Keep the objects and resources in the box provided when not in use

## COVID-19 considerations

Guidance around COVID-19 can change rapidly and this information is not intended to replace your school protocols; it simply reflects best practice for keeping objects in their best condition.

- Good hand hygiene helps to reduce the spread of the virus.
- Ensure there are 72 hours between different bubbles using the artefacts box.



# Replica Roman artefacts box

Below are images of the nine objects contained in the Roman artefact box, organized by site. Each site is identified by a different colour. The artefacts box, made from 100% natural and recyclable materials, can be kept for your school to re-use for many classes to come, if desired.

You can identify the object from the image, and use the information provided later in this pack to develop follow-up discussions with your class.

Site	Objects					
London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE	Replica wax tablet and stylus		Oil lamp		Roman buckle	
London's Roman Amphitheatre	Coin		Crest holder		Roman necklace	
Billingsgate Roman House and Bath	Strigil		Bone pin		Roman hygiene set	

# Activities using the Roman artefacts box

Here we've suggested some activities to help you guide your class in their safe exploration of the objects in the artefact box. Later in this pack you'll find more historical information about these objects and the three Roman London sites should you want to refer to them outside the live session.

In any object-handling activity in your classroom, we suggest you continue to ask open-ended questions about the objects, as modelled in the workshop.

Questioning techniques can improve problem solving, interpretation, group work, listening, speaking and being creative.



## Example questions include:

- Can you describe the texture and shape?
- Can you describe the patterns/decoration?
- What material could it be? Does it look moulded or carved?
- Is it whole or broken and what are the clues?
- Who might have used it?
- Is it like anything we use today?
- What does it tell us about Roman life 2000 years ago?

# London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE

## Replica wax tablet and stylus

Archaeologists found more than 400 wax tablets at the Bloomberg site; one room had so many it might have been an office. Beeswax was used to fill the tablets. Archaeologists can see messages scratched through the wax into the wood below. Paper and parchment were expensive, used for books and important documents. Wax tablets could be reused, so were used for things like education, messages and business accounts.

The metal pointed object is for scratching into the wax surface and erasing errors, like a pencil. It's called a 'stylus'. The French word for pen is *le stylo* and modern electronic tablets use a stylus.



Smell it: you might get a faint honey smell.

What else is beeswax used for?



What are the properties of beeswax?

Scratch it: how does the wax react when scratched?

How might that characteristic be useful?



How would the two ends of the stylus affect the smooth wax surface? How does the stylus fit in your hand?

What kinds of messages do you think you might find on a wax tablet?

## Oil lamp

Roman oil lamps are often found with evidence of burning around the larger hole on the spout/nozzle end. There is a small breathing/refilling hole inside the central circle (*discus*). It's hollow and would hold a small amount of oil. There would be a wick/string in the nozzle hole that would hold the flame, like a candle.



Describe the decoration.



Does the decoration give you any evidence about Roman clothes, soldiers, gladiators or animals?



What design would you put on an oil lamp? Look for clues to how it was created. What tools might the Roman potter use to create the design? Can you use similar tools?

## Roman buckle

Buckles were relatively rare in Roman Britain in the 1st–3rd centuries AD.

The buckles we do have are mostly those used by the military for armour and belts.

Armour was also fitted using leather straps and metal buckles. Leather doesn't usually survive.



Describe the feel of this object, using three adjectives (e.g., heavy, smooth, sharp, decorated).



Is it complete? What's missing?  
How can we tell who might have worn the whole belt?  
What does that tell us about who visited the site?



The *cingulum* or *balteus* (belt) was part of Roman soldiers' uniform. You could adapt a leather or fabric belt, using strips of paper and adding decorations.

Explore what soldiers would wear here:

<https://segedunumromanfort.org.uk/learning/legionary-soldiers-the-builders-of-the-wall>

# London's Roman Amphitheatre

## Coin

Roman money was 'commodity currency' – each coin should weigh a certain amount.

This is a replica *sestertius*. In today's money, a *sestertius* would be approximately £2.

It was minted in 80/81AD in the rule of Titus (on the other side) to celebrate the opening of the Flavian Amphitheatre in Rome.



Why are most currencies made out of metal?

- Hard wearing
- Has a value
- Can stamp complicated designs on it



What types of information can you get from a coin?

- Ruler
- Date (useful for archaeologists)
- Trade
- Locations

## Crest holder

The base of the object has a slot in it so it can be slid into a bracket on top of a helmet. The fork on top supports a crest usually made of horse hair (from the mane or tail).

There are two types: front to back (possibly for legionaries) and side to side (possibly centurions).

Roman soldiers were well trained, marching in armour over 32km per day, carrying their equipment (tents, food, cooking pots and weapons).



Why did Roman soldiers wear crests?



Experiment with marching in unison.

Keep in step using the instruction '*sinister, dexter*' or '*sin, dex*' (left, right).



Make a paper helmet:

<https://assets.bbhub.io/company/sites/30/2022/04/MakeAGladiatorHelmet.pdf>

### Roman necklace, 2nd–3rd century AD

The original would have been made from a sheet of gold with wires and blobs of gold fused on to make the decoration.

Archaeologists have found a clasp and chain in one of the drains that took away the dirty water from the arena. Objects like this show the audience dropped their belongings.



Who might have bought and worn this?



What do you think this object tells us about their status in Roman *Londinium*?



Write about how it felt to lose your favourite, valuable piece of gold jewellery when you were watching a show at the Amphitheatre.

# Billingsgate Roman House & Baths

## Strigil

An essential part of the bathing process, which took place in a series of heated rooms. Heat opened skin pores where dirt had become trapped. Sweating helped the dirt come out. Olive oil was then rubbed onto the skin to collect the dirt and sweat and make the skin slippery. Finally, the person was scraped with a metal strigil, which could be painful (the oil helped reduce the pain).



Describe the object.  
What material is it made of?  
Why is there a loop at one end?



Try posing with the strigil as an athlete bathing after a hard day.

Statues show athletes using strigils. Oil and powder were used like a sunscreen when competing and needed to be removed with a strigil.

## Bone pin

Pins were often carved with a decorative head. They would have been used to pin clothing in place, or to pin hair up.

Romans recycled animal bone to make objects like combs, dice, game-board pieces, knife handles, pins, bracelets and spoons.



Why aren't objects like these made out of bone now? What material do we usually use instead?



How do we know Roman women wore their hair pinned up? Evidence from sites: grave goods, statues and paintings of Roman hairstyles, and letters about getting hair ready for a party.

### Roman hygiene chatelaine/manicure set

This set may have been worn on a belt so it was readily available. The set has (left to right): tweezers; a little scoop, thought to be for cleaning out ear wax or mixing cosmetics; and a nail cleaner/toothpick.

Romans were sometimes buried with their personal chatelaine set.

Keeping clean and presentable took time, so wealthy Romans could spend longer on their appearance than poorer Romans or enslaved people.

Men used perfumes and light hair removal.

Men and women were expected to look neat but spending too much time on their appearance or looking too perfect was considered vain. Appearance was a moral and social issue.



Does this remind you of anything we use now?



We call this a manicure set now, which comes from the French word for hand (*le main* from the Latin root *manus*), just as pedicure comes from the Latin word for foot: ped (*peditatus* = foot soldier). How did these words come into the French and English languages from Rome?



The Latin words for the different temperatures of the Bathhouse rooms: "the *frigidarium*" (a cold bath), "the *tepidarium*" (a warm bath) and the "*caldarium*" (a hot bath).



Mime some members of a Roman family enjoying a relaxed time in their bathhouse, playing games but also plucking out arm hairs, scraping their skin, getting very hot. The class can guess which tool you are using or which bathhouse activity you are miming.

# Further artefact activities

Use the artefacts from the box or go online to explore the stories of 600 Roman London artefacts, via **Bloomberg Connects**, our free arts and culture guide. **Scan the QR code** to download the app, or visit Bloomberg Connects **here**.



## Old and new

Find modern equivalents for Roman objects:

- Set a research task on a particular object that pupils can share in class.
- Turn this into a guessing game based on: describing how an object is used; drawing an equivalent object; or bringing in a relevant modern object.

## Object sorting

Archaeologists sort objects in various ways to help learn more about them. You could experiment with different categories:

- Materials:
- properties
  - organic and non-organic (decomposes or doesn't)
  - man-made or natural
- Type of object:
- personal objects or tools
  - functional or decorative
  - higher status or lower status

## Make a museum

Practise interpretation skills by making a display of the objects:

- Agree an overall theme for your display.
- Write short captions for the objects, selecting the most relevant information to share.
- Think about design: How do you make a display attractive? Can you use props or position objects to help your visitors understand?



# Acknowledgements

## London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE

London Mithraeum Bloomberg SPACE has returned the Roman Temple of Mithras to the location of its discovery in the heart of the City.

Situated on the site of Bloomberg's European headquarters, this unique cultural space showcases the ancient temple, a selection of the remarkable Roman artefacts found during excavations, and a series of contemporary art commissions responding to one of the UK's most significant archaeological sites.

For more information, [click here >](#)

## City of London Corporation

The City of London Corporation is the governing body of the Square Mile dedicated to a vibrant and thriving City, supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally successful UK.

For more information, [click here >](#)

## London's Roman Amphitheatre

In 1988, prior to the start of building work on the site of the new Guildhall Art Gallery, archaeologists made an exciting discovery – the remains of London's Roman Amphitheatre. Immediately protected by the government, plans for the gallery were redrawn to preserve the remains 'in situ'. Only part of the Amphitheatre was excavated and preserved: the remains of one of two principal entrances, the Eastern entrance, together with two flanking rooms and parts of the arena wall. Two sections of wooden drain have also been preserved beneath glass panels on the floor.

For more information, [click here >](#)

## Billingsgate Roman House and Baths

In 150 AD, a house was built on the banks of the Thames. 100 years later, the owners built a bathhouse in the central courtyard. The house was occupied until the early 5th century AD, when it was abandoned along with the rest of Londinium. It then collapsed as the weight of the hill behind it pressed on the walls. It was rediscovered in 1848 by Victorian builders and is now preserved under an office block at 101 Lower Thames Street.

For more information, [click here >](#)

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## Culture Mile Learning

Culture Mile Learning brings together a diverse range of cultural, heritage and arts organisations from across London to work on an unprecedented scale to offer world-class learning experiences. The partnership focuses on developing the fusion of creative, communication, thinking and organisational skills in young people that is needed by today's employers.

For more information, [click here >](#)

## Bloomberg Philanthropies

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in over 120 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organisation focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's giving, including his foundation, corporate and personal philanthropy.

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